



NASH CATALYST FUND Request for Proposals (RFP) – Removing Cost as a Barrier

Background on Removing Cost as a Barrier RFP

As an incubator of best practices, the National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) is thrilled to host our Catalyst Fund to support innovation at scale at public higher education systems. Its impact is far reaching but the concept is simple: through pooled philanthropic support, NASH can recognize and incentivize the development of big ideas that, once proven to work, have the potential to be scaled not only within one system but amongst peers across the country.

Through this RFP, NASH is seeking interventions that demonstrate “positive deviance” at one or more institutions within the **California Community Colleges System**, or within the system office. Positive deviance is an approach to behavioral and social change based on the observation that in any community there are people whose uncommon but successful behaviors or strategies enable them to find better solutions to a problem than their peers, despite facing similar challenges and having no more resources or knowledge than their peers. In this RFP round **we are looking for examples of positive deviance that remove cost as a barrier to higher education.**

In the “relevance” section of the proposal, respondents must indicate how the intervention specifically works to remove cost as a barrier to higher education. In addition, successful proposals will reflect **student-centered policies and practices.**

Successful proposals will address problems of practice in equitable access and affordability, including but not limited to:

- Making college accessible to low-income students by meeting their full financial needs, particularly needs that are unaddressed by traditional financial aid packages and policies.
- Making college affordable to students by reducing the net price through reduced tuition rates or providing: differential tuition based on circumstances, fee waivers, need-based scholarships, last-dollar gap-filling awards, open educational resources, and microgrants to attend to basic needs (e.g., food, housing, clothes, books, supplies, etc.)
- Improving practices, timeliness, and transparency, related to communicating and demonstrating clear and standard information about cost and financial aid offers to help students and families assess college affordability.
- Providing wrap-around support for non-traditional and/or low-income students through daycare and other social services, transportation, food banks, affordable housing, healthcare, legal assistance, etc.
- Decreasing time to degree through efforts targeted to low-income, traditionally under-represented, and/or non-traditional students.

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About the NASH Catalyst Fund

The NASH Catalyst Fund encourages broad engagement of system members in sharing promising practices that are leading to equitable student success outcomes scalable to fellow institutions and systems. The hotspots of best practices recognized through the Catalyst Fund demonstrate actions that are already underway and proving to be successful – with the potential to have a catalytic impact in meeting NASH’s national goals for credential and degree completion, upward social mobility, and decreasing student debt.

The available levels of Catalyst Fund awards and the purposes are as follows:

- Level 1: Prove (up to \$5,000) - You have implemented an intervention that shows signs of positive impact
- Level 2: Expand (up to \$7,500) - You have tested your concept locally or with another institution or system and have promising results to share
- Level 3: Analyze (up to \$10,000) - You have promising results to share and are requesting funds for a deeper analysis to improve the concept or solve the problem

For the current RFP, NASH has \$220,000 in available funding focused on innovations that remove cost as a barrier to higher education.

Successful applicants will:

- Receive a recognition award (directed to the institution) of at least \$5,000 that can be spent flexibly in support of the awarded intervention
- Be recognized by NASH via press release and highlighted in publications regarding best practices in college affordability
- Pending funding, be invited to participate in a Community of Practice focused on removing cost as a barrier

RFP Timeline – Q4 Launch

1 st Week of March 2024	Catalyst Fund RFP released via email
April 15, 2024	RFP Responses due via email to catalyst@nash.edu
Spring 2024	Awards finalized and announced

Proposal Format

Proposals must be submitted as a Microsoft Word document email attachment using the **provided form** (attachment “Catalyst Fund RFP Form – CCC”). Forms must be submitted via email to catalyst@nash.edu by 12:00pm PT on Monday, April 15, 2024.

Proposals must be responsive to all of the following elements to be eligible for recognition:

Project Summary Details

Proposals must include a title, a one-sentence description of the intervention’s mission, the name(s) of the institution(s) currently implementing the intervention, and the number of individuals served (past and present) by the intervention.

Executive Summary

Institutions should briefly outline the intent, methodology, and impact of the intervention, focusing on how the outcomes reduce cost as a barrier and demonstrate potential for the intervention to be scaled or replicated at additional institutions within or external to the system.

Amount of Funding Requested

The available levels of funding and the purposes are detailed on the prior page.

Narrative that Addresses the Following:

The review of proposals will focus mainly on methodology, impact, relevance, and scalability:

- **Methodology:**
 - What problem are you trying to solve and why are you well positioned to solve it?
 - How was the intervention developed, implemented, and progress monitored?
 - How does the intervention reflect student-centered policies and practices? This may be reflected in the process undertaken to identify the problem, program design, and/or implementation.
 - What was the timeline for development and implementation and how long was the intervention implemented before demonstrating results? (A visual representation of the timeline may be included as a single page attachment, but is not required.)
 - What specific inputs—including financial, human capital, and physical resources—were invested to ensure/support successful outcomes of the intervention? (A budget may be included as a single page attachment but is not required.)

- **Impact:**
 - What was the intended impact of the intervention and was it met or exceeded?
 - What were the outputs and outcomes in terms of discrete and disaggregated data points (to the extent available) on college access and affordability, including the number of individuals supported, improvements to retention, graduation rates, and equity and inclusion? (Visual representations of data may be included as a single page attachment in numerical chart form but are not required.)

Respondents are advised to adhere to all relevant student privacy policies when sharing data.)

- **Relevance:**
 - How does this proposal address removing cost as a barrier to public higher education and advancing equitable access and affordability?
 - Respondents may also wish to refer to responsiveness to student voice and needs in this section.

- **Scalability:**
 - What is the current scale of adoption of this intervention from the institution- and system-wide perspective?
 - How/could the proposal be scaled to reach more individuals in the population(s) being served?
 - What, if any, are the current obstacles to scaling and how could they be surmounted?

The review of proposals will also take into account collaboration, sustainability, and dissemination:

- **Collaboration:**

How does the intervention demonstrate interdisciplinary, cross-functional/programmatic/institution collaboration toward improved outcomes? This collaboration may already be in place or may be a targeted next step.

- **Sustainability:**

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- What thought has been put into sustaining the work at this stage?
- What conditions would have to be met to ensure short- and long-term sustainability?
- **Dissemination:**
 - How could/is the intervention be/ing replicated within the institution (as relevant), across institutions, and across systems and states?

Criteria for Catalyst Fund Proposals

Proposals should adhere to the criteria outlined below to provide an adequate basis for review and evaluation. Proposals that meet the favorable criteria are more likely to be eligible for Level 3 awards.

Required	Favorable
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative is responsive to the prompts• Directly addresses cost as a barrier• Serves 2- or 4-year undergraduate students as part of a credential or degree program• Has been in place for at least one cohort or academic year with early indicators of positive outcomes• Reflects student voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narrative fully addresses the prompts• Directly demonstrates potential for significant impact on removing cost as a barrier• Successfully serves a representative/diverse group of at least 10 students• Has demonstrated outcomes for multiple cohorts or academic years• Directly responsive to student needs

Eligibility

At this time, this RFP is open to institutions within the California Community Colleges System and the system office itself. Nominated interventions may be at the campus or system level, but all applications must be submitted via email to catalyst@nash.edu by April 15, 2024.

Terms and Assurances

NASH reserves the right to:

- Request clarification or information that may not be provided within proposals without promise of eventual award
- Adjust the RFP timeline as necessary
- Make an award for a different amount than proposed
- Make an award for an amount distinct from the levels of funding described herein based on the needs and opportunities demonstrated in the proposal
- Publicize award recipients and publicly celebrate the impacts of the awarded interventions
- Reject any or all awards and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability

Awardees must:

- Refrain from sharing personally identifiable student information in proposal materials.
- Participate in a follow-up interview with NASH staff regarding the awarded intervention.
- To the maximum extent practicable, be available to present their intervention at future NASH virtual or in-person events at the request of NASH staff.

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- Share outcome data at least annually for up to three years (December 2027) to support NASH in monitoring the ongoing implementation and sustainability of the intervention.
- Expend awarded funds solely in support of the awarded intervention. Allowable uses of funds include but are not limited to paying for direct services to the intended beneficiaries of the intervention including scholarships, if applicable; purchases of services or goods in support of the intervention; travel related to the intervention; salaries or benefits of staff; and event expenses related to the intervention. Given the intent and limited size of Catalyst Fund awards, **indirect/overhead costs are not an allowable use of funds.**
- Respond within 45 days to NASH’s requests for updates on implementation of the awarded intervention, to take place no more than twice annually throughout the period of performance, including questions related to any changes in methodology, scope, impact, or outcomes.
- Grant NASH permission to publicize the intervention, including press releases and related website content regarding the intervention based on information provided in the Awardee’s request for proposals response and future reports to NASH.

Questions

Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to Jessica Todtman, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of NASH, at catalyst@nash.edu.

Submissions

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